

Making the Case for

Principal Mentoring

THE EDUCATION ALLIANCE AT BROWN UNIVERSITY
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory A program of The Education Alliance at Brown University

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Making the Case for Principal Mentoring was created by the National Association of Elementary Schools Principals in partnership with Collaborative Communications Group. The research and development of this publication was made possible by the LAB at Brown University, Principals Leadership Network. This publication is based on work supported by the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), United States Department of Education, under Contract Number ED-01-CO-0010. Any opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material do not necessarily reflect the views of IES, the U.S. Department of Education or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

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FOREWORD

We are pleased that the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) and the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)—a program of The Education Alliance—have partnered to create the Principals' Leadership Network (PLN). The PLN, an emerging organization for principals, of principals, and by principals, conducts action research in the field to develop solutions to the problems faced by today's K–12 principals. One of the key issues is mentoring new and existing principals.

Mentoring programs connect principals with people who can help them test ideas, reflect on their own practices, model effective practices, navigate tough situations, and affirm their approaches.

Much is known about the value of principal leadership as it relates to the success of teachers and students and how effective leaders create school communities where both students and adults are learning. There is an unquestionable connection between the principal's ability to lead learning and the support they themselves receive in their everyday work. Mentoring supplies the necessary support as effective job-embedded professional development.

We believe that mentoring is an effective way to support principals. NAESP is in the early stages of creating a national initiative to train and support principal mentors. The LAB is working with NAESP to develop promising practices and supporting research for this initiative.

What we are learning from current literature, studies, and the practices of NAESP affiliates and the LAB—much of which is captured in this guide—will significantly inform the development of this initiative and our ongoing work to support an advocate for mentoring programs across the country.

Vincent L. Ferrandino, Ed.D., Executive Director
National Association of Elementary School Principals

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This guide is designed for school districts and other educational groups that are designing and refining their own mentoring programs. The information here can help make the case for a new mentoring program or provide guidance in fine-tuning a current program.

The Northeast and Islands Regional Laboratory at Brown University (LAB)—a program of The Education Alliance—is collaborating with NAESP through a regional network of K–12 principals who are working to fine-tune the leadership skills necessary to their profession. The group, known as the Principals’ Leadership Network (PLN), is exploring a number of topics, including mentoring, through action research designed specifically to strengthen the principalship.

Principals and aspiring leaders who are considering participating in mentoring programs can also use this guide to understand the national landscape of principal mentoring and what effective programs look like.

The “In Practice” examples and the “Resources” section provide sources for further reading on the subject.

Hopefully, this guide will serve as a starting place for a broader understanding of and deeper commitment to quality principal mentoring programs.

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More than ever, there is a need for strong, effective principals who can lead their schools to excellence.

There's an oft-heard saying: "Behind every great school is a great principal." Surely that has always been the case, but today, in the era of standards-based education and high-stakes accountability for the performance of students *and* adults in our schools, the job of principal has never been more complex or more critical.

More than ever, there is a need for strong, effective principals who can lead their schools to excellence. And yet, as large numbers of principals approach retirement, fewer teachers seem inclined to pursue leadership positions; the demands are great and often the compensation per day worked is less. Many of the teachers who do go on to become principals are ill-prepared for the job and too few stay in the job.

SWIMMING WITHOUT A LIFEJACKET

"The job of principal," says Gary Bloom, associate director of the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, "has become more difficult, and the expectations of the job have become more ambitious. And that's coupled with the shortage of qualified candidates. So what we're seeing are people coming into the principalship who have all of the innate skills to succeed, but what they don't have very often is the kind of experience that in the past prepared people to step into the job. Ten or 20 years ago, you might have been an assistant principal for five, six, or seven years before becoming a principal. Now, it might be six months."

In Louisiana, a survey of 215 teachers who were certified as administrators found that only half of them were interested in becoming principals. Among their reasons: the increased complexity and responsibility of the job, stressful work conditions, and a lack of resources and support.

The fact is, principals have traditionally been thrown into their jobs without a lifejacket, and they are expected to sink or swim. “Isolated and without guidance,” notes researcher and former principal Mark Anderson, “newcomers often make mistakes that may have long-term consequences.”

Adds John Daresh, professor of educational leadership at the University of Texas at El Paso, “Educators know that the world of the superintendent or principal,

The fact is, principals have traditionally been thrown into their jobs without a lifejacket, and they are expected to sink or swim.

although exciting, challenging, and often personally rewarding, is also a world filled with considerable anxiety, frustration, self-doubt, and loneliness. But there is also a corresponding part of the world of school administrators in many school systems that proclaims, ‘You’re the boss. Fix your own problems and don’t ask for help from anyone. If you can’t do the job on your own,

you’re a failure.’ Indeed, the image of the leader as the Lone Ranger is very much alive in the world of school administration.”

According to a 2001 Public Agenda survey of superintendents and principals, published as *Trying to Stay Ahead: Superintendents and Principals Talk about School Leadership*, 92% of the respondents agreed that the time and responsibilities demanded by the job discourage many people from pursuing the principalship as a career. “The principal’s job is almost overwhelming,” wrote one respondent. “My desk is never clear of obligations. Constant interruptions from parents, teachers, and others add to the stress of the day.”

Against this background, a growing number of educators have discovered an effective—and perhaps essential—tool for preparing and developing effective school leaders: mentoring.

Increasingly, states and school districts are using the practice to help attract and train their aspiring and novice principals. In the process, they hope to come to grips with the shortage of qualified administrators and, at the same time, combat the image—and reality—of the principalship as a lonely, thankless, and overwhelming job.

Educators are beginning to recognize that, given the increasing complexity and importance of the principalship, school districts can no longer afford to leave novice principals alone, isolated from helpful colleagues, when solving complex problems.

“As a new principal,” observes Nadya Aswad Higgins, executive director of the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association (MESPA), which offers a mentoring program for first- and second-year principals, “you’re learning the

job, you're learning about the community, and you're trying to figure out what the goals of your school are going to be. There isn't necessarily someone you can talk to about your problems. That's why mentoring is so important. It's imperative that you have somebody who is neutral and somebody who understands the challenges of the job to be able to help you walk that path."

Since 1991, MESPA has tailored mentoring programs that support new principals facing a changing landscape of education reform in Massachusetts. MESPA has always used retired principals as mentors, taking advantage of their desire to stay connected and their ability to step back and be reflective about the profession. As the funding for mentoring programs has waxed and waned, and as the demands on principals' time have increased, MESPA has adopted an approach in which it offers a "menu" of opportunities to participants in its programs. Recently the association began a program that offers six free, after-school seminars in a semester. The program brings together new principals to discuss readings on leadership (by Ronald Heifitz, Richard Elmore, and others) and network with one another.

BETTER TRAINING, BETTER SUPPORT, BETTER PRINCIPALS

Mentoring is nothing new. The very word "mentor" comes from Homer's *Odyssey*. Before departing for Troy, Ulysses entrusts his son, Telemachus, to his wise friend Mentor, who serves as teacher, guardian, and guide to the prince during Ulysses' 20-year absence.

Corporations have long used mentoring—either informally or formally—as a career-development strategy in which experienced executives offer developmental assistance to their less experienced protégés.

According to several studies, more than one third of the nation's top companies have established mentoring programs.

Novice teachers, too, have benefited from mentoring-based training programs. More than 30 states have implemented some form of mentoring for new teachers at the elementary and secondary levels, and some states even require teachers in training to intern with a mentor teacher prior to obtaining their teaching licenses.

Yet relatively few principals have participated in formal mentoring programs as part of their leadership training. Fewer than half of the superintendents interviewed for a 1998 Educational Research Service (ERS) survey indicated that their districts had a formal induction or mentoring program for new principals. In addition, only

**[In my first year on the job,]
my feet hit the floor and I
learned by doing.**

— A principal's response in an ERS study

about one fourth of the superintendents reported the existence of an aspiring principals program to recruit and prepare candidates for leadership positions.

When you talk to those principals who *have* been mentored, the response is usually positive. In 2000, NAESP and National Association of Secondary School Principals (NAESP) published a report titled *The Principal, Keystone of a High-Achieving School: Attracting and Keeping the Leaders We Need*, based on an ERS survey of current and past principals. When asked about the strengths and weaknesses of their own preparation for the principalship, respondents identified “good on-the-job training under a fine mentoring principal” as a “strong plus.” (By contrast, they characterized academic training that was “too theoretical” as a “minus.”) Those who took part in successful internships praised mentoring for providing aspiring principals with a realistic view of

Having a first-rate school without a first-rate principal is impossible.

— NAESP, in *Leading Learning Communities*

the position and for better preparing them to do the job well.

But such support has not always been provided. One principal who participated in the survey described his first years on the job this way: “The support I received was minimal. My feet hit the floor and I learned by doing.”

The 2001 Public Agenda survey of superintendents and principals revealed significant dissatisfaction with the way school leaders are trained. Nearly 70% of the principals surveyed agreed that typical graduate-school leadership programs “are out of touch with the realities of what it takes to run today’s school district.” One respondent observed that “practical vs. theory is still a problem in training.” Another wrote that “administrators come out of many of these programs and don’t understand how intense that position is going to be.”

NAESP’s *Leading Learning Communities: Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able To Do* specifically identifies mentoring as a useful strategy in the ongoing professional development of both novice and veteran principals.

“A successful principal,” the guidebook notes, “no matter how new or senior in the field, also appreciates the value of and need for mentoring within the principal profession. The principal learns valuable lessons from other leaders. Just as a principal should institute a mentoring program for teachers within the school, today’s principal should also view principal mentoring as a valuable tool resulting in improved leadership skills and, ultimately, a stronger learning environment.”

Mentoring expert John Daresh cautions that people should not view the practice as a panacea that will solve all of the problems facing school leaders. “[M]entoring for school leaders,” he writes, “is meant to be at least one weapon in an arsenal of

activities that could assist people who take on the challenges of trying to make a difference in schools. ... Effective mentoring must be understood as a process that is much more sophisticated than simply sharing craft knowledge when called upon by organizational newcomers. It must be seen as a proactive instructional process in which a learning contract is established between the mentor and the protégé.”

Daresh, in *Leaders Helping Leaders*, a how-to guide for setting up a mentoring program, presents a three-phase model that includes initial planning, implementation, and evaluation. He also describes the many benefits of mentoring to potential mentors, protégés, and districts:

- ▶ Mentors report greater overall job satisfaction, increased recognition from their peers, greater opportunities for career advancement, and renewed enthusiasm for the profession.
- ▶ For protégés, benefits include increased confidence about their professional competence, the ability to see theory translated into practice, the creation of a collegial support system, and a sense of belonging. According to Daresh, “Protégés learn more about their professional lives and gain more insight into their personal needs, visions, and values [from mentoring] than through any other kind of learning experience.”
- ▶ School districts report higher motivation levels and job satisfaction among staff members, increased productivity, and an attitude of lifelong learning among administrators.

GROWING FUTURE LEADERS

Reports of a looming principal shortage alarm many educators and policymakers. According to a joint study by NAESP and NASSP, more than half of elementary, middle, and high schools reported a shortage of principal candidates. The U.S. Department of Labor has estimated that 40% of the nation’s 93,000 principals are near retirement, and that the need for school administrators through 2005 will increase by 10% to 20%. The result is that an increasing number of districts are now making efforts to “grow their own” school leaders.

According to the Public Agenda survey, 84% of superintendents say they are actively and deliberately grooming someone on their staff for a more senior position, and most principals (67%) say they are doing the same in their schools. One principal noted, “I am a strong advocate of encouraging teachers to seek out leadership roles. Two principals and three curriculum coordinators have come from our building over the past five years. We need to support our teachers as future leaders.”

Many school districts have begun to create their own leadership academies to train and support principals. Such programs often contain strong mentoring components. Some are designed for teachers who hope to advance to leadership positions;

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others are designed as support mechanisms for new principals. The mentoring itself varies widely from program to program; internships can last anywhere from a few days to more than a year.

Typically, leadership programs draw mentors from the ranks of practicing administrators who often work in schools separate from those in which their protégés teach. But retired principals also serve as mentors, and, in some cases, professional, full-time “coaches” do the job. In general, mentors are current or former administrators

who work closely with their protégés, often in confidence, and are available to answer just about any kind of question, be it personal or professional. Coaches, by contrast, tend to work with more than just one principal, and their instruction may cover only certain aspects of the principalship. (Sometimes, however, the words “mentor” and “coach” are used interchangeably.)

COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS, AUTHENTIC EXPERIENCES

Setting up and sustaining a mentoring program requires creating and managing complex relationships. To be effective, mentoring relationships must be authentic, meaning that the mentor is credible and qualified to comment on performance and the protégé is willing and able to accept the mentor’s feedback and incorporate it into his or her practice.

Based on more than 10 years’ experience with principal mentoring in Massachusetts, Nadya Aswad Higgins advises that anyone who runs a mentoring program must take care to build into the application process for the program a method for gathering information needed to match mentors and mentees. “The closer you can match the conditions under which the new principal is working with the mentor’s experience and expertise, the more successful the mentoring process will be,” says Higgins.

But great principals aren't necessarily great mentors, cautions Peggy Hopkins-Thompson, former director of a leadership academy in North Carolina. Whether protégés select their mentors or have them assigned to them, she advises that flexibility must be built into the program to allow for changes in matches that are not working. Higgins reinforces this notion: "It's one thing to live the job, but it's another thing to teach someone to live the job."

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— Nadya Aswad Higgins, executive director,
Massachusetts Elementary School Principals
Association

Robert Malone, a research analyst with the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), cautions that artificially constructed mentor-protégé relationships can neutralize the effect of mentoring. "Even the most accomplished mentors," he writes, "can fail to connect with a protégé, resulting in a neutral-effect relationship at best."

Malone also points out that race and gender issues complicate the formation of mentor-protégé relationships. The majority of school superintendents and principals who might serve as mentors are white males; yet more than 73% of all teachers who might aspire to the principalship are female. Generally, female and minority aspiring principals "cannot rely on traditional avenues for forming such relationships," writes Malone, suggesting the need for particular attention to mentor-protégé relationships for these groups.

EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS

Malone points to increasing evidence that school leaders can benefit from a well-conceived mentoring program. "When asked to identify a vital component of their preparation," notes Malone, "principals typically identify other school leaders as their primary source of help in becoming a school leader themselves, and they confirm that these mentoring relationships served them throughout their careers, not just initially."

Gary Bloom, associate director of the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, has conducted a study (with colleagues Michael Strong and Adele Barrett) of participants in the center's New Administrators Institute, a two-year induction program for first- and second-year principals. The novice principals attend nine seminars during the course of the school year, which are led by

LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS THAT EMPLOY MENTORING

The Rhode Island Center for School Leadership. Spearheaded by the Rhode Island Association of School Principals, the Rhode Island Center provides collaborative professional development training for the state's school leaders. But with fewer teachers going into school leadership positions, the center decided to take a proactive role in addressing the problem by starting the Aspiring Principals Mentor Program.

"We look at this as an orientation program to give someone who might be aspiring to become a principal the opportunity to get a taste of what the job is all about," says Doreen Corrente, the center's executive director. The goal of the program, she adds, is "to develop and promote school leaders from within."

Now in its fourth year, the program serves 20 teachers who have been identified by their superintendents for their leadership potential. Once selected, participants attend a series of workshops, seminars, and panel discussions led by veteran principals and designed to provide an overview of the role of school leaders. In addition, the aspiring principals spend one week at a school of their choice working alongside a mentor principal.

Extra Support for Principals. In Albuquerque, New Mexico, district officials were also concerned about the increasing difficulty of finding and retaining qualified principals. The district, with 83,000 students and 126 schools, often had to advertise two or three times in order to get enough qualified applicants.

Several years ago, the district started a voluntary program called Extra Support for Principals, or ESP. Designed to combat job frustration and burnout while making the critical first year as successful as possible, the program matches new principals with experienced administrators. The goal is to develop long-term bonds.

The novice principals are encouraged to select their own mentors, notes program coordinator (and retired principal) Carl Weingartner. "Although it is not always possible to provide new principals with their choices," he noted in *Principal* magazine, "it is important that they be given an opportunity to participate in the selection."

Principals who agree to serve as mentors receive a small stipend. Each mentor-protégé team determines its individual agenda, but mentors are encouraged to meet with the new principals throughout the year. In its first seven years, ESP has provided mentors for more than 100 first-year principals.

Many other kinds of institutions are sponsoring principal leadership programs that use mentoring. These include:

- ▶ State education departments, such as the California School Leadership Academy
- ▶ Nonprofit foundations, such as Rhode Island’s Big Picture Company
- ▶ Colleges and universities, such as the University of Washington, which offers the Danforth Educational Leadership Program for principals in training
- ▶ State administrator associations, such as the Massachusetts Elementary School Principals Association and the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association

Some of these programs and several others are highlighted in the second half of this guidebook.

professional coaches—experienced principals on loan to the university or recently retired administrators. The coaches meet with the new principals at their schools once every two weeks, providing them with hands-on guidance and support.

According to the study, participants reported being “very satisfied” with the program, particularly with their coaching experiences. “What they value most

of all from their coaches,” the report notes, “is the opportunity for reflective conversations, emotional, and moral support, and the affirmation that they are doing

What [principals] value most of all from their coaches is the opportunity for reflective conversations, emotional, and moral support, and the affirmation that they are doing a good job.

— Report on the New Administrators Institute

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE MENTORING

Not all mentoring programs are alike, but the best ones share certain traits. Consultant Peggy Hopkins-Thompson, former director of the Wake Leadership Academy in Raleigh, N.C., describes some of the common features of effective mentoring programs.

- ▶ **Organizational Support.** The superintendent is especially critical for ensuring the success of a mentoring program. Mentors are more likely to schedule time with their protégés if they know the organization values the practice.
- ▶ **Clearly Defined Outcomes.** The program must clearly specify outcomes and include details of knowledge and skills to be attained.
- ▶ **Screening, Selection, and Pairing.** The selection and screening process for both mentors and protégés is critical. Mentors must be highly skilled in communicating, listening, analyzing, providing feedback, and negotiating.
- ▶ **Training Mentors and Protégés.** Training for mentors should build communication, needs analysis, and feedback skills. Training for protégés should include strategies for needs analysis, self-development using an individual growth plan, and reflection.
- ▶ **A Learner-Centered Focus.** Feedback should focus on reflection, address that which the protégé can control and change, be confidential, and be timely.

According to expert John Daresh, effective mentoring programs must include:

- ▶ **An investment of time and commitment** on the part of both the teacher and the learner
- ▶ **A sharing of information** that goes beyond answering questions that come up when people are trying to survive on the job
- ▶ **The creation and maintenance of a mutually enhancing relationship** in which both the mentor and the protégé can attain goals that are related to both personal development and career enhancement

a good job. Since the program has been in existence, its participants have remained in administration at high rates, although it is too early to make comparisons with principals in general. Anecdotally, several principals attribute the program to helping them stay the course.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Gail Gross, deputy executive director of NAESP, is encouraged by the growing number of principal mentoring programs being offered around the country. “Most of the research shows that principals who are successful in their leadership roles have had some very deliberate coaching and mentoring during their first, critical years,” Gross says. However, she points out that “there are probably as many different plans and processes in place as there are school districts.” Gross and others believe that a national effort is needed to serve as a model and source of support for states and districts growing their own programs.

In response, NAESP has developed an initiative to explore a national mentor certification program in which “master mentors” would receive extensive instruction in mentoring before serving as trainers for local mentors. “With this program,” Gross says, “we’re creating something at the national level that could complement, supplement, or perhaps be an alternative to some of the programs that may be of less quality than we’d like to see.”

Gross sees a national principal mentoring program as a natural outgrowth of the organization’s efforts two years ago to develop standards for principals. “NAESP is committed to helping the field set standards for the quality of principal mentors and ensure that high-quality mentors are available where they are needed.”

NAESP President Paul Young, who is currently on leave from his job as principal of West Elementary School in Lancaster, Ohio, knows from experience the value of a good mentor. Years ago, when Young first became a principal, he received an important visitor on the first day of school. Young recalls, “A principal at another school, about eight miles away, came over and knocked on my door and said, ‘Listen, I’m only a phone call away. You’re a fool if you don’t pick up that phone and call me when you’ve got a question.’ And I did—many times. His help was invaluable that year.”

NAESP is committed to helping the field set standards for the quality of principal mentors and ensure that high-quality mentors are available where they are needed.

— Gail Gross, NAESP

Today, Young is calling on all principals to identify, encourage, and nurture at least five aspiring principals before retiring. “I’ve done it myself,” he says. “In fact, two of the teachers I’ve mentored are now principals in my school district. One of them is even filling in for me at my school this year.

“Some will argue that grooming a successor takes an inordinate amount of time,” he adds. “Others will argue that job succession will take care of itself, or that it is the responsibility of the superintendent or others in the central office. But that is shortsighted. In reality, working closely with a high-quality aspiring principal can be invigorating, enlightening, and very fulfilling.”

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Learning by Doing

Principal Residency Network The Big Picture Company

The premise of the Principal Residency Network, operated by the nonprofit Big Picture Company of Providence, Rhode Island, is that the schoolhouse—not the university—is the best place for developing the next generation of leaders. The central feature of the program, which was founded in 1998 and serves approximately 20 aspiring principals a year in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont, is a full-time, site-based residency under the guidance of a mentor principal. Graduates are fully certified to work as administrators.

Candidates must apply to the program with a specific mentor principal in mind and the endorsement of their district superintendent. Participants, selected for their leadership capacity and commitment to school change, spend a full school year working and learning alongside their mentors. “We highly recommend that the aspiring principal move into the principal’s office,” says Molly Schen, director of program development for the Big Picture Company, “and if the principal’s office isn’t big enough that they both move into a larger space.” That way, she says, the mentee can experience every aspect of the principal’s day-to-day work life.

In addition, the participants craft individualized learning plans with their mentor principals, and they are required to initiate a consequential project to address a challenge or need in the school. They continually reflect on their work and leadership development through formal and informal writing.

Aspiring principals and mentors come together for monthly seminars and quarterly institutes to share best practices, provide support and critical feedback, and discuss theory and research related to educational leadership. The aspiring principals are also required to visit a number of schools both within and outside the program network.

“Our dream,” notes Dennis Littky, co-director of the Big Picture Company, “is that the graduates, aspiring principals who are now principals, will in a few years’ time become mentoring principals, and that they will profoundly change the design and culture of schools so that kids have better opportunities.”

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Our dream is that the graduates...will in a few years' time become mentoring principals, and that they will profoundly change the design and culture of schools so that kids have better opportunities.

Training for the Future

Aspiring Principals Academy Region 8 Education Service Center of Northeast Indiana

As in many other parts of the country, Indiana is facing a shortage of principals. According to one estimate, the state will lose as many as half of its administrators to retirement in the next three to five years. Filling those vacancies has become a matter of some urgency.

To help identify and train future administrators, Indiana's Region 8 Education Service Center, which is based in the town of Markle and serves 32 school districts in 14 counties, created the Aspiring Principals Academy. Participants are teachers who have been singled out by principals and district superintendents for their leadership potential. Each year, the academy selects about 25 teachers for the program, which is now in its fourth year.

Participants must attend eight dinner seminars and four all-day workshop sessions on topics related to school leadership. In addition, their building principals serve as mentors and "critical friends" during the course of the academy program. The teachers spend four days shadowing their mentors while designing and implementing a school-improvement project that is based on reflective practice and documented with the preparation of a portfolio. Each participant also spends time with a secondary coach—usually an administrator from another school.

Program coordinator Linda Michael describes the mentorship as "a collaboration between two people who are really unequal in position in the school hierarchy. One of the things we try to do is to equalize that situation, so the two become colleagues instead of boss and employee."

Michael estimates that about 20 previous academy participants are now working as principals in their home districts. Still, Michael fears that even with the academy, filling administrator positions will be a challenge in the coming years. The reason? Many teachers just aren't that interested in becoming principals. The top salary for teachers in Indiana, she points out, is "very close" to a principal's salary, yet the job responsibilities are "enormous."

"Principals have to do it all," she says. "It's overwhelming. And not everybody wants to devote her entire life to leading a school building."

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Participants spend four days shadowing their mentors while designing and implementing a school-improvement project that is based on reflective practice and documented with a portfolio.

A Joint Effort

California School Leadership Academy Foundation 3.0 Program

New Administrators Institute University of California at Santa Cruz

The California School Leadership Academy is a partnership of the California Department of Education and WestEd, a nonprofit research, development, and service agency. CSLA runs 12 school leadership centers throughout the state which offer a number of professional development programs for teachers and administrators.

CSLA's Foundation 3.0 program is designed for new, experienced, and aspiring principals and instructional leaders. Participants attend a series of thematically related seminars over a two-year period. The goal is to develop the capacity of individual school leaders at all levels and to facilitate actions that lead to high achievement for all students.

Barry Vitcov is the executive director of CSLA's South Bay office, which is based in San Jose and serves a four-county region. In his service center, the Foundation 3.0 program is increasingly being used by districts to "grow" future principals because, Vitcov says, "there is such a shortage of qualified administrators." Last year, he adds, one large district had about 25 participants in the program, and this year 20 of them were appointed to administrative positions.

Although the program doesn't have a formal mentoring component, coaching from CSLA trainers is available at the seminar sessions. However, another program, a collaboration with the New Teacher Center at the University of California at Santa Cruz, provides one-on-one coaching for new administrators.

The New Administrators Institute serves about 60 first- and second-year principals in the South Bay region. The novice principals attend nine seminars during the course of the school year, which are led by professional coaches—experienced principals on loan to the university or recently retired administrators. The coaches meet with the new principals at their schools once every two weeks, providing them with hands-on guidance and support.

“You don’t learn how to be a principal in graduate courses,” says program director Gary Bloom. “You learn it on the job. So the goal of this kind of coaching support is to speed up the learning curve for folks and also to help them survive the initial couple of years that are so difficult.”

Research on the New Administrators Institute, Bloom says, indicates that the participants are emerging as instructional leaders more quickly and more effectively than unsupported principals. “We’re really encouraged that it’s making a difference,” he says.

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Linking Theory and Practice

Danforth Educational Leadership Program The University of Washington

Mentoring is at the heart of the University of Washington's Danforth Educational Leadership Program, which prepares experienced teachers to become K-12 principals and program administrators. The one-year, intensive program includes a half-time internship and a rigorous academic program linking theory and practice.

Each year, 32 students participate in the program. They are required to serve at least one internship but preferably two in different districts and settings—urban, suburban, or rural—both at the elementary and secondary levels. “Our goal,” says program director Kathy Kimball, “is to give them the broadest big picture we can give them within a year.”

Typically, each student spends about 20 hours a week with his or her mentor, who is an experienced principal working in a school in the Puget Sound area. The students don't merely shadow their mentors—they also are responsible for working on a significant school-improvement project during their internship. Examples include developing a peer-tutoring or parent-involvement program, planning and scheduling staff development, or supervising teaching assistants.

The mentors, says Kimball, are carefully selected. “What we want,” she says, “are people who are willing to give of themselves and also give of their time and delegate—share the leadership. Some people are great principals but they can't for a minute share it with others. So it takes a unique person who's willing to say, ‘Come alongside me and work with me. I'll show you how this happens.’” Some mentors are former Danforth students.

The Danforth program was initially funded by the Danforth Foundation, based in St. Louis, Missouri. Now in its 15th year, it is self-sustaining. The internship, says Kimball, is “among the highest rated features of the program,” which also includes a residential summer institute, instructional modules, and weekly reflective seminars.

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We want mentors who are willing to give of themselves, give of their time, and share the leadership. It takes a unique person who's willing to say, 'Come alongside me and work with me. I'll show you how this happens.'

Critical Friends

Emeritus Corps Advanced Leadership Program for Principals New York, NY

Unlike many leadership training programs, which serve aspiring or novice principals, the Emeritus Corps Advanced Leadership Program is tailored for high school principals with three or more years of experience. Affiliated with The Education Alliance at Brown University and the Executive Leadership Institute at the Council of Supervisors and Administrators of the City of New York, the program was established by a group of retired New York City principals who wanted to give something back to the school system in which they spent their careers.

“We thought it would probably be more helpful to target principals who already have a few years’ experience,” says co-director Madeline Lumachi, “because at that point, they really have absorbed the survival skills. They’ve reached that point where they’ve begun to think more deeply about what they’re doing and whether or not they’re really having an impact on instruction and student achievement.”

The program, which was just launched this fall, will eventually serve 48 principals in the New York City public schools. It includes three components: a monthly leadership seminar series, resource consultation, and mentoring. Each principal is asked to identify a particular school problem that needs to be solved. Then, a team of retired principals serving as consultants assists the principal at his or her school over a period of three days. Together, they develop strategies to address the issue and develop a plan of action that will lead to school improvement and increased student achievement.

Out of that experience comes the mentoring piece, in which the working principal and the retired principal form what Lumachi calls “a holistic relationship characterized by trust, confidentiality, honesty, sensitivity, shared expertise, and personal and professional growth.”

“We hope the mentoring component won’t be the same-old same-old,” she says. Many well-intentioned mentoring programs are more about crisis management. We want the mentor to be more of a critical friend to the principal and engage in a kind of Socratic dialogue, so that the principal answers his or

her own questions rather than having the so-called expert come in and tell them what to do. You want the principal to focus on something that is important that they are trying to accomplish in the school, and together you work through that challenge.”

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The principal and the retired principal form a holistic relationship characterized by trust, confidentiality, honesty, sensitivity, shared expertise, and personal and professional growth.

Focusing on Leadership

First-Year Campus Administrators Program Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association

In Texas, state law requires that all first-time principals—those who are new to the job or new to the state—take part in a year-long induction and mentoring program. To help districts train their new administrators, the Texas Elementary Principals and Supervisors Association (TEPSA) has developed the First-Time Campus Administrators Academy. Based on research into the effectiveness of teacher induction, TEPSA designed the program to last two years. The state's education service centers and individual districts administer the program.

New principals are paired with mentors who must have at least five years of experience and be currently certified as administrators. “We strongly recommend that the mentor not be the first-time administrator's supervisor,” says Betty Jo Monk, a professor of educational administration at Baylor University who designed the program for TEPSA. “That's a very difficult relationship to pull off: supervisor/mentor.” The best mentors, she says, come from different schools and preferably from different districts. That way, the mentee can be completely open and honest with his or her mentor without fear of reprisal.

The mentors and their mentees meet in person at least once a month, supplemented by phone calls and e-mails. The first-year administrators and their mentors also meet as cohorts three times a year for standards-based professional development training. During the first year, the burden is on the mentors to help build the relationship. The hope is that, in the second year, the relationship will become more collegial.

The goal of the program, says Monk, is “to help pull the first-time campus administrator out of the morass of management issues that they're drowning in and keep them focused on leadership issues.”

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The goal of the program is to help pull the first-time campus administrator out of the morass of management issues and keep them focused on leadership issues.

Learning From the Experts

Principal Mentoring Program New Visions for Public Schools

In recent years, large numbers of principals—most of them aging baby boomers—have retired from the New York City public schools. As a result, nearly three fourths of the system’s current principals have less than three years’ experience on the job. Former schools chancellor Harold Levy was so concerned about those statistics that he contracted with New Visions for Public Schools, a local nonprofit organization, to launch a two-year program designed to give the city’s newest principals much-needed mentoring from recently retired veteran administrators.

Now in its second year, the Principal Mentoring Program matches 12 retired principals with 72 novices. Each mentor is responsible for six brand-new principals, or mentees. During the first year, the mentor spends a half day each week working onsite with his or her mentee, offering support, advice, and encouragement. (The mentors are also available for consultations by telephone or e-mail.) In the second year, communication between the mentor and mentee is less frequent.

“The temptation of an experienced principal,” says program director Arthur Foresta, “is to give answers. ‘Yeah, I’ve done that, and this is what I did, this is what I suggest you do.’ And what they really need to do is help the new principal find his or her own way. So they are trained to ask questions in order to get their mentees to reflect and make decisions for themselves.”

Once a month, Foresta meets with his mentors for training sessions. “They may have been terrific principals,” he says, “but they need to work on their mentoring and coaching skills.” The mentors are required to submit detailed (but confidential) observations about their experiences with the new principals. About six times a year, the mentor and his or her six mentees meet together as a cohort to compare notes and strategies. That component is designed to help the novices overcome one of the biggest pitfalls of being a principal: job isolation. “They become part of a network,” says Foresta, “and they have relationships with other people who are in similar situations.”

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Growing Their Own

Educational Leadership Development Academy San Diego City Schools

A collaboration between the San Diego City Schools and the University of San Diego (USD), the Educational Leadership Development Academy (ELDA) offers training for both aspiring principals and early career administrators. The goal of the academy is to build a pool of high-quality principals who will help lead their schools to excellence.

Each year, 10 to 20 teachers are accepted into the Apprentice Program for Aspiring Leaders. Participants are released from their classrooms for one year in order to shadow and work closely with experienced principals who have been trained in effective mentoring.

The aspiring principals attend courses co-taught by district staff members and USD professors, but mentoring, says executive director Elaine Fink, is the critical element.

“When it comes to training principals,” she says, “there really is nothing better, as long as the mentor is guiding you in the right direction and has the skills to help you get where you need to go. It’s very important that the mentor be chosen with a lot of care and a lot of thought to what the particular intern needs, and that you monitor the relationship along the way to see that the goals are being achieved.”

Graduates of the program receive their five-year preliminary administrative credential and are eligible to apply for vice principal and principal positions in the San Diego schools.

Meanwhile, early career administrators who seek their permanent credential may apply to the academy’s two-year Induction and Support Program, which also employs mentoring.

The ELDA is supported in part by a \$4.2 million, three-year grant from the Broad Foundation.

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When it comes to training principals there really is nothing better, as long as the mentor is guiding you in the right direction and has the skills to help you get where you need to go.



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